Met Office recognised for encouraging biodiversity

29 July 2011 - The Met Office has become one of only a handful of organisations to achieve a prestigious benchmark for protecting and promoting biodiversity at its Exeter HQ.

From creating wildflower meadows to introducing bee hives, the award marks years of work to integrate wildlife and environmental considerations into the day to day operations of the Exeter site.

The Wildlife Trusts has recognised that by awarding the Met Office its Biodiversity Benchmark Award. Only 15 organisations and 40 sites in the UK have met this rigorous standard so far and the Met Office is the first from the public sector.

Neal Pearce, Environmental Advisor, at the Met Office said: "This standard is very tough to both achieve and maintain, as it requires sites to be environmentally managed to the highest of levels.

"This award reflects the commitment of the Met Office to minimise our impact upon the environment, whilst endeavouring to promote and actively enhance the biodiversity performance from our sites."

The work to get the Benchmark follows on from work of volunteer members of staff at the Exeter site who helped create its first wildflower meadow. These habitats have been in decline for decades but are important for supporting many species of wildlife.

Initially the area designated as a wildflower meadow covered three quarters of an acre, but this has now been extended to three acres.

Additional habitats have been identified across the site to encourage a wide range of wildlife, for example bee hives have been added, and nesting boxes for swifts and bats are being investigated as part of a regional project, supported by the Devon Wildlife Trust.

The range of work has already had a positive impact, with observations suggesting significantly more diversity of species noted on the site, including the rare 'Maiden Pink' wild flower, classified as a nationally scarce species.

Biodiversity Transcript (PDF, 124 kB)

Mr Pearce added: "The key to getting this recognition has been not only been in recognising and encouraging biodiversity on our site, but also of integrating biodiversity consideration into our management systems to ensure environmental concerns are taken into account in the decisions we make.

"We'll be aiming to widen this best practice to some of our other sites in future as we continue to build our commitment to encouraging biodiversity."

Peter Dorans, Corporate Relations Manager for The Wildlife Trusts, said "I am delighted that the Met Office has achieved Biodiversity Benchmark on its Head Office site. It demonstrates that, even on a site used primarily as office accommodation, with careful and committed management wildlife can flourish.

"Like other public sector organisations the Met Office, both as a landholder and a part of the community in which it operates, has a major role to play in the realisation of our vision of A Living Landscape. Achievement of Biodiversity Benchmark is a major challenge and demonstrates the Met Office's commitment to playing its part in the restoration of the natural world."

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